

An Inaugural Dissertation

on

Dyspepsia

by

William S. Alexander

of

Virginia.

April 4th 1855.

Dyspepsia.

The stomach, being one of the most important, of the Chylific Viscera and upon the Health, of which, that of the whole System or immediately depends; that its, Diseases should claim our first and greatest attention. It is sometimes sympathetically affected, but it has the power of sympathising, with all the other Viscera; but most generally, the Disease called Dyspepsia, is a primary affection of this Organ; and is defined by Dr. Cullen a loss of Appetite, sometimes a Nausea and Vomiting, sudden and transient distentions of the Stomach, eructations, which are generally acid; a heat and burning pain in the Epigastric Region and a bound Belly; frequently a depraved appetite, for rancid, Stale, Fiee Coals, or putrid Aliments.

All these symptoms, do not universally appear, in every case, but at times are all concomitant.

The causes of this Disease, as they present themselves to us, naturally divide into, two Classes; such as act directly and such as act indirectly on this Viscus.

By the former, I mean such as act immediately, on the Stomach, or Alimentary Canal and by the latter, such as act, through the Medium of the whole System or any part of it, on the Stomach.

Among the former, are, the habitual use of strong Tea or Coffee, with little Cream or Sugar; partaking of many Dishes, whereby the Stomach, is allured, to receive, more than it is capable, of Digesting. The too free use of Condiments, as Mustard, Pepper, Vinegar &c. the latter, of which, of late Years, has proved, the Bane of many Female Constitutions; from the false idea, of becoming Delicate; by its use. The frequent use of Acid, or Acersant Aliment and such as run quickly into, the Acetous fermentation. The intemperate use of, ardent Spirits, Opium,

Tobacco and other Stimulating Narcotics. The too long continuation of, Nitrate of Potash as a Medicine and the too frequent employment of Emetics. Over Distention of the Stomach, with Fluids or Aliments, particularly; the frequent repletion of the Stomach in the morning, with cold Water. Bad Teeth or the swallowing of Food, not sufficiently masticated. The latter causes are Indolence, Vexation of Mind, Grief and Distress, Intense application of mind to business, without sufficient exercise. Excess in Eating, Drinking and Venery. Exposure to a cold and damp Atmosphere. Scantiness of Food; partial Abstinence, Pregnancy, Sailing, Obstructions of neighbouring Viscera, particularly, the Liver; and sometimes, offensive sights and Odours.

The predisposing cause of this Disease, is Debility in whatever manner, it may, be induced. The proximate cause, is, morbid action, in the

The first and chief object of the
Oration is to inform the
Jury of the facts of the case
and to point out the
evidence in support of the
charge. The second object
is to show that the
facts are proved by the
evidence. The third object
is to show that the
law is applied to the
facts. The fourth object
is to show that the
verdict is justified by the
facts and the law.

Muscular Fibers of the Stomach. All the Symptoms before enumerated, as, Cardialgia, Gastric Denia &c. are the effects, of morbid action, in the muscular coat, of the Stomach.

It is plain, from what has been already said, that there are, three indications, to be attended to, in the attempt, of its cure. First, to avoid or remove the remote causes, which, have been before said to induce Debility; or its predisposing cause. To accomplish this first and all important end, it behoves the Patient, to commit himself entirely to the Charge of his Physician, who, should urge the necessity of his renouncing, all preistine pursuits and habits, which, may have tended to lay the foundation of his Disease: as by their continuation, every object or attempt towards a cure must necessarily, prove abortive. Therefore, if he, may have lead an indolent life, absorbed in all the

Debaucheries and amusements of a crowded City; He should relinquish them, for the enjoyments and more valuable air, of a Country life: He should retrace the footsteps, whereby he has wandered, from the simple path, of Nature. He should, pay the strictest observance, to Dress, Diet and the hour of rising and going to Bed. His Dress, should be accommodated to the weather; his Diet, plain and simple and of few Dishes; and should always retire early and rise at a stated hour, every Morning: use moderate exercise Eat frequently; but in small quantities, of Nutritious food and easy of Digestion. He should, always prefer, Biscuit or Crackers, to fermented or loaf Bread; for the latter, soon runs into a state of fermentation and is so easy of deglutition; that a person is more apt to be deceived and eat too much of it. whereas the Crackers, demand a much Saliva to moisten and lubricate them; that we are much less apt, to eat

to excess of them; for the Glands themselves, will cease,
to afford the necessary supply of Saliva. He should
occasionally, eat of, good Ham, Beef Steaks, Fowl, of
various kinds; particularly of, Wild Fowl. Fish, both
shelled and scaled; of the former, Oysters, Lobsters &c -
of the latter; Perch, Trout and Carp &c.

The second Indication of cure, is, only palliative,
whereby we only obviate the symptoms, which, tend to
prolong, or aggravate; the Disease. The remedies
are various and numerous, depending in a great mea-
sure, on the Idiosyncrasy of the Patient.

I am acquainted with a Gentleman, frequently af-
fected with Gasterodinia, which, I have said is a
Symptom, which, can only be relieved by the fol-
lowing, Stimulating Bolus. R Gum Opii: gr i:
Gum. Asafatida gr v Gum. Camphora gr v framed
into a Pill, with, a little Soap.

Dr. White, mentions the case of a Lady, who,

could only accomodate, or digest her Dinner, by pre-
ceding it with, Thirty drops, of Sassafras.

The remedies more generally employed, are Magnesia
Alba. Chalk or Lime water; to neutralize or ob-
tund the acid, with which, it sweets in the Stomach:
also Volatile Alkali, which, likewise acts, by its stim-
ulating power: so likewise does, Opium or a few grains
of pepper. A Tea spoon full of Mineral of Soda, or
Lime juice, or unskinned Milk; here the acid, is de-
stroyed, by decomposing the Milk; separating it into
Curd and Whey. The Carbonate of Soda, in Doses of
vss several times a Day. Some one of these Remedies
will always prove serviceable; in alleviating the
distressing Symptoms, which, sometimes supervene:
But unfortunately, as soon as the Patient is re-
lieved, of his present Symptoms; he, considers him-
self cured and is unwilling, as he says, to under-
go a course of Medicine.

The third and last object of the Physicians, should be, to effect a radical cure, which, he should attempt, upon the same principles; that he would attack any other Disease; that is, he should be regulated in his prescriptions, by the state of the System and the Symptoms, of the Disease. If the Pulse, be full and tense; Bloodletting should be performed and if the Pulse be not reduced, it should be used, again and again. However, there is generally but little tension and the Saunect, is, but seldom resorted to; as it may, be easily reduced by an Emetic; which, likewise throws off, the Ingesta, from the Stomach, or Duodenum: For this purpose, I would advise, *Specacuhana*, or *Sulphate of Zinc*; as they, possess, with their Emetic quality, something, of a Tonic virtue: consequently, do not debilitate the System, so much as the *Tartaris. Antimonii*; *Kermes mineral &c.* It is sometimes necessary to repeat them, several times, at others; one or two will

be sufficient: However; this can only be decided on, by the Symptoms of the Patient. After you have reduced, the inflammatory Diathesis of the System; you then should endeavour, to restore the tone of the Stomach, which, can only be, permanently done; by strengthening the whole System; which, and may be obtained, by the administration of the Mineral or Vegetable Tonics.

The Rubigo Ferri, is one of the best Metallic Tonics; either alone, or in combination, with some one of the bitter Tonics: If alone, you may commence, with five Grains; three times a day and increase gradually, unto Sixty. It, may, then be omitted, for some other Tonic: for a short while, for from habit, the System becomes accustomed to it; whereby, its virtues, are impaired. When you give it in combination, five Grains, may be mixed; with ten, of Columbus. The Sulphate of Zinc, alone, or in combination; with Quassia, is an admirable formula; from

one Grain, of the former; to, ten of the; latter.

The white Oxid of Bismuth, has been, highly celebrated; in Doses, from one; to, ten Grains. All, the vegetative Tonics; would no doubt, be serviceable in this Disease; but, those which are most generally used, are, principally taken; from the list, of the Bitters; such as, Gentian, Centaury, Quassia, Columbo, *Karara verticillata*, *Lanthe-ris apia-folia*, and the *Hydrastis Canadensis*.

The Cinchonas, the *Cornus Florida* and *Ceresia*, are valuable Medicines; in this Disease: and I believe, a watery infusion of them; would be, the better for-mula. I would recommend, all these articles, to be given; either, in substance, or watery Infusion; and in rotation; for, the System soon becomes accustomed to them; so that, a large accustomed dose, of one, might be supplied, by a smaller dose of a different article. We should be particularly careful, to avoid spirituous Tinctures, or infusions, for; no benefit, in this

Disease; is to be reaped from Tonics, unless, long continued: whereby, if we use them; the Patient contracts, so great a fondness for Spirit, that he is unable, to lay it aside; consequently, we entail on him, a more baneful Disease; than that, of which, we have, attempted to relieve him.

Blisters, have been spoken of, highly; in this Disease. Dr. Darwin, recommends them, to be applied; to the Back. Dr. Rush, thinks they would be, more efficacious; if, applied to the Epigastric Region: They, probably would be of service, when the morbid action is weak; by exciting a stronger action externally, thereby; producing a Stetastasis.

Mineral waters likewise, have been highly, celebrated, in the cure, of Dyspepsia; but, I think, have borne a much greater Character, than they really deserve, from any Medicinal properties, which, they possess: That a trip to Bath, often proves curative, I have

no doubt: but, this in my opinion, proceeds from
the change of Atmosphere, Company and the exercise,
the Patient is necessarily compelled to take; before he
arrives there: and should he then be in that state,
which, demands Tonics; they may prove useful; from
the small portion of Iron, or other Metal; they may
hold in solution. A much more speedy and certain cure
may be performed, by the foregoing treatment and at
far less trouble and expense.

Throughout the whole cure, of this Disease; the
utmost attention should be paid, to the state of the
Bowels; as Costiveness, is always, a concomitant.

The Patient should be directed, at a stated hour, every
Morning, to solicit an evacuation; even should it be
without an inclination; for ten, or fifteen minutes and
this, from its continuation; for three Weeks, or a Month;
will become natural, and nature, will continue, to
make the demand. If this should not be successful,

I would advise the patient, to carry the Root, of the
Rheum Palmatum, in his pocket; chewing it frequently
in the course of the Day; so as to procure one evacuation
in the twenty four hours: or he might take, ten Grains
of the powder, made into a Pill, with a little Soap..
Some have advised the Aloetic Pill, but I scarcely
ever think them admissible, for persons of such a habit;
are scarcely ever exempt, from the Piles; which, would
be aggravated by their use.

The appearances after Death, by desection, in this
Disease; are various; as any part of the Stomach is
liable, to be involved in Disease: however, that end,
uniting it to the Duodenum, is most frequently
found to be, the seat of Disease; and the Pylorus,
is either found contracted, Ulcerated, or Ichinous.

Dr. Wistar, related a case, where, he found two
large hard tumours, situated immediately op-
posite each other; in the Coats of the Stomach:

so as to form a Septum, or as it were, two Stomachs;
but by pressure, allowing its contents, to pass be-
tween them; on their way, to the Duodenum.

